

Application/Control Number: 08/973,293

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claims pto

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1. Integrated circuit (IC) module/apparatus for dispensing postage for a mail piece comprising:
 5 a memory for storing first data representative of a value of postage funds;
 an interface for receiving selected information concerning the mail piece and information concerning a value of the postage, the value of the postage funds being a function of the value of the postage; and
 10 a processor for encrypting at least the selected information to generate second data, the first data and the second data being provided for creation of a postage indicium indicative of payment of the postage.
- 15 2. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said second data includes a digital signature.
3. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said memory further includes an encryption algorithm, said selected information being encrypted in accordance with said encryption algorithm.
- 20 4. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said encryption algorithm is an RSA algorithm.
5. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said encryption algorithm is a digital signature algorithm (DSA).
- 10 6. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said memory includes information for determining past postage dispensation.
7. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the value of the postage funds is charged in response to a purchase.
- 35

8. Apparatus for generating a content of a mail piece, said mail piece including a cover for enclosing said content, said apparatus comprising:
 an input for receiving data representative of at least said content, said data excluding a value of cost of delivery of said mail piece;
 a processor for computing the cost of delivery of said mail piece based on said data; and
 an output for generating said content based on said data, and applying at least an indicator indicative of the computed cost onto said content at a selected location thereof.
9. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said cost includes postage for delivering said mail piece.
10. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said indicator includes a postage indicium.
- 20 11. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said indicator is applied onto said content close to an address.
12. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein information concerning said cost is read by a scanner's scanning said indicator.
- 15 13. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said cover is an envelope.
14. The apparatus of claim 11 wherein said envelope has at least one window conforming with said indicator such that at least part of said indicator exposes through the at least one window.
- 30 15. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein at least part of said data is indicative of the selected location.

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16. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein the selected location is a corner of said content.
17. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said processor derives, from said data, information for determining a weight of said content.
18. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said processor derives, from said data, information concerning pagination of the content.
19. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said processor derives, from said data, information concerning an addressee.
20. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said information includes zip code information.
21. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said processor derives, from said data, information for identifying at least one party to which said cost is attributed.
22. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said processor computes said cost based on one or more selected shipping rates.
23. The apparatus of claim 8 further comprising a memory for storing a database.
24. The apparatus of claim 23 wherein said database includes statistical information based on said cost.
25. The apparatus of claim 23 wherein said database includes information identifying said mail piece for tracking thereof.

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11. Apparatus for processing a mail piece for which postage needs to be dispensed before delivery of the mail piece comprising:
 an interface for obtaining from the mail piece selected information appearing on the mailing piece; and
 a processor responsive to at least the selected information for determining whether to dispense the postage.

12. The apparatus of claim 11 wherein said interface includes a connector for connecting a scanner to said apparatus.

13. The apparatus of claim 11 wherein the selected information is represented by a bar-code on said mail piece.

14. The apparatus of claim 11 wherein the selected information includes data identifying an originator of said mail piece.

15. The apparatus of claim 14 wherein the processor disallows a dispensation of the postage when said originator is determined to be unauthorized to expend the postage.

16. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein the originator is an individual.

17. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein the originator is an organization.

18. The apparatus of claim 11 wherein the selected information includes information representative of an authorization code.

19. The apparatus of claim 18 further comprising a receiver for receiving data representative of most of said delivery.

20. The apparatus of claim 19 wherein the processor determines whether to dispense the postage also in response to said data.

16. (currently amended) A postage indicium processing system comprising at least a postage indicium dispensing apparatus, the postage indicium dispensing apparatus comprising:

a processor for creating a postage indicium for processing by a first party, the postage indicium including:

a proof of payment, the service by a first party; and
 transactional data comprising at least information representative of a transaction amount.

the first party causing the transaction amount to be paid to a second party in response to at least the transactional data when the first party processes the postage indicium;

and
 an output for generating said postage indicium;

wherein the first party is a consumer service or a postal authority, and the second party is a bank.

37. (original) The apparatus of claim 16 wherein said transactional data includes information identifying said second party.

38. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 16 wherein said transactional data includes information concerning an originator of said postage indicium.

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39. (original) The apparatus of claim 16 wherein said transactional data includes an indicator indicative of a method by which the transaction amount is paid to the second party.
40. (original) The apparatus of claim 39 wherein said method includes an electronic funds transfer.
41. (original) The apparatus of claim 16 wherein said transactional data includes a personal identification number (PIN).
42. (original) The apparatus of claim 41 wherein said PIN is encrypted.
43. (original) The apparatus of claim 36 wherein said transactional data includes instructional information, the first party causing the transaction amount to be paid to the second party in response to the instructional information.
44. (original) The apparatus of claim 43 wherein said instructional information includes a request for a confirmation by the first party to the second party that the transaction amount has been paid.
45. (original) The apparatus of claim 43 wherein said instructional information includes information on a date by which the transaction amount is paid to the second party.
46. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 36 wherein said postage indicium includes a digital signature for authenticating at least part of said postage indicium.
47. (original) The apparatus of claim 36 wherein said transactional data is encoded in a bar-code.
48. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 36 wherein said postage indicium includes a human readable portion.
49. (original) The apparatus of claim 48 wherein said human readable portion includes information identifying said second party.
50. (original) The apparatus of claim 48 wherein said human readable portion includes the transaction amount.
51. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 36 wherein said postage indicium includes a machine readable portion.
52. (original) The apparatus of claim 36 wherein said first party is a postal authority.
53. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 36 wherein said first party is a courier other than a postal authority.
54. (original) The apparatus of claim 36 wherein the amount of said payment for service is zero.
55. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 36 wherein said postage indicium is generated onto a tangible medium.
56. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 55 wherein said tangible medium includes a label.
57. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 36 wherein said postage indicium is generated onto a mail piece.

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57. (Currently amended) The system of claim 36 further comprising a postage indicium processing apparatus, the postage indicium processing apparatus comprising:

a processor for processing ~~an~~ ~~input~~ ~~on~~ ~~the~~ postage indicium including a proof of payment, for service by a first party, and the transactional data comprising at least information representative of a transaction amount; and

an output responsive to at least said ~~the~~ transactional data for causing ~~said~~ ~~the~~ transaction amount to be paid to a second party when the postage indicium is processed.

58. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 50 wherein said postage indicium appears on a mail piece.

59. (Original) The apparatus of claim 50 wherein said processor causes said mail piece to be delivered according to an address appearing on said mail piece.

60. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said processor includes a scanner for scanning at least part of said postage indicium.

61. (Original) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said transactional data includes information identifying said second party.

62. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said transactional data includes information concerning an originator of said postage indicium.

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64. (Original) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said transactional data includes an indicator indicative of a method by which the transaction amount is paid to the second party.

65. (Original) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said method includes an electronic funds transfer.

66. (Original) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said transactional data includes a PIN.

67. (Original) The apparatus of claim 66 wherein said PIN is encrypted.

68. (Original) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said transactional data includes instructional information, the first party causing the transaction amount to be paid to the second party in response to said instructional information.

69. (Original) The apparatus of claim 68 wherein said instructional information includes a request for a confirmation by the first party to the second party that the transaction amount has been paid.

70. (Original) The apparatus of claim 68 wherein said instructional information includes information on a date by which the transaction amount is paid to the second party.

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71. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said postage indicium includes a digital signature for authenticating at least part of said postage indicium.

72. (Original) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said transactional data is encoded in a bar-code.

73. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said postage indicium includes a human readable portion.

74. (Original) The apparatus of claim 73 wherein said human readable portion includes information identifying said second party.

75. (Original) The apparatus of claim 73 wherein said human readable portion includes the transaction amount.

76. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said postage indicium includes a machine readable portion.

77. (Original) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said first party is a postal authority.

78. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said first party is a courier other than a postal authority.

79. (Original) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein the amount of said payment for service is zero.

80. (Original) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said postage indicium is fixed on a tangible medium.

81. (Original) The apparatus of claim 80 wherein said tangible medium includes a label.

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8. A system for dispensing postage for a mail piece comprising:
an IC module comprising a memory for storing first data representative of a value of postage funds; an interface for receiving selected information concerning the mail piece and information concerning a value of the postage, the value of the postage funds being a function of the value of the postage; and a processor for encrypting at least the selected information to generate second data; and
an output for generating a postage indicium indicative of payment of the postage based on at least the first data and the second data.

9. The system of claim 8 further comprising a computer.

10. The system of claim 9 wherein said computer is a personal computer (PC).

11. The system of claim 9 further comprising a control element for controlling access to said system.

12. The system of claim 9 further comprising a management information subsystem for processing documents.

13. The system of claim 12 wherein said documents include invoices.

14. The system of claim 9 further comprising an address cleaner for checking address information on the mail piece.

15. The system of claim 12 further comprising a second interface for obtaining shipping rate information.

16. The system of claim 12 further comprising a second interface for communicating with a remote computer.

17. The system of claim 12 further comprising a second interface for establishing a connection to a communication network.

18. The system of claim 17 wherein said communication network includes at least part of the Internet.

19. The system of claim 17 further comprising a communicator for communicating information with a selected recipient.

20. The system of claim 19 wherein said communicator communicates with a certification authority other than the selected recipient to verify receipt by the selected recipient of the information.

21. The system of claim 19 wherein said communicator communicates with a certification authority other than the selected recipient to verify access by the selected recipient to the information.

22. The system of claim 12 wherein said second data includes a digital signature.

23. The system of claim 12 further comprising a transmitter for transmitting facsimile information.

24. The system of claim 19 wherein said facsimile information is encrypted.

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99. The system of claim 97 wherein said facsimile information includes a digital signature for authenticating the facsimile transmission.
100. The system of claim 97 further comprising a receiver for receiving facsimile information.
101. The system of claim 100 wherein said facsimile information is encrypted, said receiver includes a decoder for decrypting the encrypted facsimile information.
102. The system of claim 100 wherein said facsimile information includes a digital signature, said receiver includes a mechanism for verifying said digital signature.
103. The system of claim 97 wherein said memory further includes an encryption algorithm, said selected information being encrypted in accordance with said encryption algorithm.
104. The system of claim 103 wherein said encryption algorithm is an RSA algorithm.
105. The system of claim 103 wherein said encryption algorithm is a DES.
106. The system of claim 97 wherein said memory includes information for determining past postage dispensation.
107. A method for use in an IC module for dispensing postage for a mail piece comprising the steps of:
storing first data representative of a value of postage funds;

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5 encrypting at least the selected information to
generate second data, and
 providing the first data and the second data for
creation of a postage indicium indicative of payment of
the postage.

109. The method of Chain 103 wherein said selected
10 information is encrypted in accordance with an encryption
algorithm.

111. The method of claim 109 wherein said encryption algorithm is a DES.

111. A method for generating a content of a mail piece, said mail piece including a cover (a) enclosing said content, said method comprising the steps of:

computing the cost of delivery of said rail pieces

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5 114. The method of claim 113 wherein said cost includes postage for delivering said ~~two~~ piece.

124. The method of claim 12) wherein said information includes pin code information.

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135. The method of claim 113 wherein information for identifying at least one party to which said cost is attributed is derived from said data.

136. The method of claim 113 wherein said cost is computed based on one or more selected shipping rates.

137. The method of claim 113 further comprising the step of storing a database.

138. The method of claim 137 wherein said database includes statistical information based on said cost.

139. The method of claim 137 wherein said database includes information identifying said mail piece for tracking thereof.

140. A method for processing a mail piece for which postage needs to be dispensed before delivery of the mail piece comprising the steps of:

obtaining from the mail piece selected information appearing on the mailing piece; and
determining whether to dispense the postage in response to at least the selected information.

141. The method of claim 140 wherein the selected information is represented by a bar-code on said mail piece.

142. The method of claim 140 wherein the selected information includes data identifying an originator of said mail piece.

143. The method of claim 142 wherein the a dispensation of the postage is disallowed when said originator is determined to be unauthorized to expend the postage.

144. The method of claim 142 wherein the originator is an individual.

145. The method of claim 142 wherein the originator is an organization.

146. The method of claim 140 wherein the selected information includes information representative of an authorization code.

147. The method of claim 146 further comprising the step of receiving data representative of cost of said delivery.

148. The method of claim 147 wherein whether to dispense the postage is determined also in response to said data.

139. (currently amended) A method for dispensing payments comprising the steps of:
creating a postage indicium for processing by a first party; the postage indicium including:

a proof of payment, for service by a first party; and
transactional data comprising at least information representative of a transaction amount;

the first party causing the transaction amount to be paid to a second party in response to at least the transactional data when the first party processes the postage indicium; and

generating the postage indicium;

wherein the first party is a carrier, service or postal authority, and the second party is a payee.

140. (original) The method of claim 139 wherein said transactional data includes information identifying said second party;

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141. (previously presented) The method of claim 139 wherein said transactional data includes information concerning an originator of said postage indicium.

142. (original) The method of claim 139 wherein said transactional data includes an indicator indicative of a methodology by which the transaction amount is paid to the second party.

143. (original) The method of claim 142 wherein said methodology includes an electronic funds transfer.

144. (original) The method of claim 139 wherein said transactional data includes a PIN.

145. (original) The method of claim 144 wherein said PIN is encrypted.

146. (original) The method of claim 139 wherein said transactional data includes instructional information, the first party causing the transaction amount to be paid to the second party in response to the instructional information.

147. (original) The method of claim 146 wherein said instructional information includes a request for a confirmation by the first party to the second party that the transaction amount has been paid.

148. (original) The method of claim 146 wherein said instructional information includes information on a date by which the transaction amount is paid to the second party.

149. (previously presented) The method of claim 139 wherein said postage indicium includes a digital signature for authenticating at least part of said postage indicium.

150. (original) The method of claim 139 wherein said transactional data is encoded in a bar code.

151. (previously presented) The method of claim 139 wherein said postage indicium includes a human readable portion.

152. (original) The method of claim 151 wherein said human readable portion includes information identifying said second party.

153. (original) The method of claim 151 wherein said human readable portion includes the transaction amount.

154. (previously presented) The method of claim 139 wherein said postage indicium includes a machine readable portion.

155. (original) The method of claim 139 wherein said first party is a postal authority.

156. (previously presented) The method of claim 139 wherein said first party is a counter other than a postal authority.

157. (original) The method of claim 139 wherein the amount of said payment for service is zero.

158. (previously presented) The method of claim 139 wherein said postage indicium is generated onto a tangible medium.

159. (original) The method of claim 158 wherein said tangible medium includes a label.

160. (previously presented) The method of claim 139 wherein said postage indicium is generated onto a retail price.

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361. A postage processing method comprising the steps of:
 processing at least one postage indicium including a
 proof of payment for service by a first party, and
 transactional data comprising at least information
 representative of a transaction amount; and
 causing, in response to at least said transactional
 data, said transaction amount to be paid to a second
 party when the postage indicium is processed.

162. The method of claim 161 wherein said postage
 indicium appears on a mail piece.

163. The method of claim 162 wherein said mail piece is
 delivered according to an address appearing on said mail
 piece.

164. The method of claim 161 wherein said transactional
 data includes information identifying said second party.

165. The method of claim 161 wherein said transactional
 data includes information concerning an originator of
 said postage indicium.

166. The method of claim 161 wherein said transactional
 data includes an indicator indicative of a methodology by
 which the transaction amount is paid to the second party.

167. The method of claim 166 wherein said methodology
 includes an electronic funds transfer.

168. The method of claim 161 wherein said transactional
 data includes a PIN.

169. The method of claim 168 wherein said PIN is
 encrypted.

170. The method of claim 161 wherein said transactional
 data includes instructional information, the first party
 causing the transaction amount to be paid to the second
 party in response to said instructional information.

171. The method of claim 170 wherein said instructional
 information includes a request for a confirmation by the
 first party to the second party that the transaction
 amount has been paid.

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170. The method of claim 169 wherein said instructional information includes information on a date by which the transaction amount is paid to the second party.
171. The method of claim 161 wherein said postage indicium includes a digital signature for authenticating at least part of said postage indicium.
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174. The method of claim 173 wherein said transactional data is encoded in a bar code.
175. The method of claim 161 wherein said postage indicium includes a human readable portion.
- 113
176. The method of claim 175 wherein said human readable portion includes information identifying said second party.
- 112
177. The method of claim 176 wherein said human readable portion includes the transaction amount.
178. The method of claim 161 wherein said postage indicium includes a machine readable portion.
- 95
179. The method of claim 178 wherein said first party is a postal authority.
180. The method of claim 179 wherein said second party is a courier other than the postal authority.
- 99
181. The method of claim 180 wherein the amount of said payment for service is zero.
- 105
182. The method of claim 161 wherein said postage indicium is fixed on a tangible medium.

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183. The method of claim 182 wherein said tangible medium includes a label.
184. A method for use in a system for dispensing postage for a mail piece, said system including an IC module, comprising the steps of:
- storing first data representative of a value of postage funds in the IC module;
 - receiving by the IC module selected information concerning the mail piece and information concerning a value of the postage, the value of the postage funds being a function of the value of the postage;
 - encrypting by the IC module at least the selected information to generate second data; and
 - generating a postage indicium indicative of payment of the postage based on at least the first data and the second data.
185. The method of claim 184 further comprising the step of controlling access to said system.
186. The method of claim 184 further comprising the step of checking address information on the mail piece.
187. The method of claim 184 further comprising the step of obtaining shipping rate information.
188. The method of claim 184 further comprising the step of communicating information with a selected recipient.
189. The method of claim 188 wherein the communicating step includes the step of communicating with a certification authority other than the selected recipient to verify receipt by the selected recipient of the information.

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190. The method of claim 181 wherein the communicating step including the step of communication with a certification authority other than the selected recipient to verify accuracy of the selected recipient to the information.

191. The method of claim 184 wherein said second data includes a digital signature.

192. A method for sending a mail piece comprising the steps of:
 indicating on the mail piece information concerning a content in the mail piece; and
 providing on the mail piece an indicator for affirming that the content is included in the mail piece, said indicator causing a processor of the mail piece to inform a third party of the information while the mail piece is being sent.

193. The method of claim 192 wherein the content includes a payment.

194. The method of claim 193 wherein the information includes an amount of the payment.

195. The method of claim 193 wherein the third party is an addressee of the mail piece.

196. The method of claim 193 wherein the indicator includes a digital signature.

197. The method of claim 193 wherein the information is encrypted.

198. The method of claim 192 wherein the information is incorporated in a postage indicium.

199. (New) The method of claim 198 wherein the indicium includes a postage amount.

200. (New) The method of claim 192 wherein the indicium affirms that the content is included in the mail piece.

201. (New) The apparatus of claim 15 wherein the indicium includes a postage amount.

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Cont'd
- [Add Claim 202]
113
202 (New) The apparatus of claim 38 wherein the indicium includes a postage amount --
- [Add Claim 203]
113
203 (New) The method of claim 170 wherein the indicium includes a postage amount --
- [Add Claim 204]
113
204 (New) The method of claim 161 wherein the indicium includes a postage amount --
- [Add Claim 205]
113
205 (New) The method of claim 194 wherein the indicium includes a postage amount --
- [Add Claim 206]
113
206 (New) The apparatus of claim 8 further comprising a generator for generating the indicium indicative of the associated 206 onto the cover --
- [Add Claim 207]
113
207 (New) The method of claim 111 further comprising the step of generating the indicium onto the cover --
- [Add Claim 208]
113
208 (New) The apparatus of claim 36 wherein said second party is a utility company --
- [Add Claim 209]
113
209 (New) The apparatus of claim 36 wherein said second party is a utility company --
- [Add Claim 210]
113
210 (New) The method of claim 192 wherein said third party is a utility company --
211. (new) The system of claim 38, wherein the originator is a payor of the transaction amount.
212. (new) The method of claim 141, wherein the originator is a payor of the transaction amount.

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